

## **Peaceful Communities Initiative**



### **Beyond Borders: Year One Annual Report October 2001 to September 2002**



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## **The Project Fundamentals:** Introduction to PCI

**The Peaceful Communities Initiative** (PCI) is a three-year USAID \$2.1 million project operating since October 2001, in Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, the three republics that share the Ferghana Valley.

**PCI aims** to reduce inter-ethnic and trans-border conflict through a combination of social and infrastructure projects driven by local Community Initiative Groups (CIGs). Through such projects, PCI strives to bring communities together to address common problems to improve the quality of life in communities across national, ethnic, gender and age boundaries, and to increase the ability of communities to identify sources of conflict and participate in a constructive dialogue to generate and implement sustainable solutions.

**Implementation** of the Initiative is through a partnership of local and international NGOs: ICA-EHIO from Tajikistan; Mehr, Fido and the Business Women's Association of Kokand in Uzbekistan; the Foundation for Tolerance International in Kyrgyzstan; and Mercy Corps in all three countries. Members of these partner organizations work together in five field teams of mixed ethnicity and gender.

**The Five Field Teams** in PCI work in five regions between the cities of Khujand and Osh (see map under Table of Contents), and take a grassroots community development approach to conflict prevention. The intentional mixture of ethnicities and nationalities within each field team is critical for maintaining an unbiased approach to understanding and addressing community problems in this complicated region.



**The PCI Logo** was developed so that all six partner NGOs would identify themselves and other partners as members of one international alliance that spans the three countries of the Ferghana Valley. This logo symbolizes the borderless multi-ethnic approach to our work.

**The Fundamental Approach** of the project is to involve a large number of stakeholders from rural communities in border areas in the decision-making process that will lead to social and infrastructure projects designed to reduce tension over scarce resources and increase peaceful contact and communication.

**The Social Projects** bring people together in a safe, familiar, peaceful setting. Social projects make a real contribution to the ability of communities to communicate with one another and cooperatively come up with effective, sustainable solutions to problems. This applies to people of all ages, but particularly to the youngest generation who have little memory of peaceful joint problem solving, and who stand to lose the most if good solutions are not found now.

**The Infrastructure Projects** are also a vital part of the process, not only as a catalyst for bringing communities together and as a solution to pressing human needs, but also as a way to engage communities at odds in peaceful problem solving. Much of the conflict in the Ferghana Valley is prompted by the scarcity of resources such as water, gas and land, and by the serious state of disrepair of the majority of education, health, agriculture, and transport facilities.

**“Community Mobilization”** is the term that is used in PCI to describe the process of bringing together members of communities to participate in assessing the needs and strengths of their village, and in prioritizing, planning and managing the projects that are identified. The greatest legacy of PCI will be the experience of listening to the voices of the entire community and its neighbors, taking responsibility for solving problems, and using local resources and initiative.

**This report** is intended for a variety of readers, from those already closely connected to the project (for example community groups, partner NGOs, or USAID) to those who have not been involved but who have an interest in projects of this type. It is a thematic summary of the ideas and impact of the first year of PCI, and an invitation for discussion about an exciting positive step in international aid, from post-crisis relief, to the much more progressive goal of conflict mitigation and prevention.

## **The Project Fundamentals:** The Ferghana Valley

**The Ferghana Valley** is a flat, highly fertile agricultural plain, surrounded by some of the highest mountain ranges in the world. Home to several major urban areas, the Ferghana Valley contains almost 20% of the population within only 5% of the landmass in Central Asia. Over ten million people live in an area that in little over a century has been ruled by the full range of modern political regimes. The Khan of Kokand ruled much of the region until it was taken over by the Tsar's Russian Empire in the later part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Shortly after Central Asia became part of the Soviet Union, the Valley was divided between the Republics of Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan. The inter-state boundaries then imposed were mostly for administrative purposes, but since independence from the USSR eleven years ago, they have become international borders, and split the valley between three sovereign nation-states. The current international borders appear to be randomly drawn, following neither natural boundaries nor the infrastructure built under the Soviet system, resulting in disputes over resources.

As part of the Silk Route between East and West, the Ferghana Valley has been influenced by a wide range of Persian, Arabic, Mongolian, European, Indian and Chinese peoples, the legacies of whom are now combined with the current presence of Turkic and Russian cultures, languages and politics. The major ethno-linguistic groups still present are Uzbek, Kyrgyz and Tajik, and in smaller numbers Russian, Tartar, Turkish, Korean, Romani and Uighur. The region has indigenous traditions of both nomadic and sedentary farming and trade, and has experienced political cultures ranging from feudalism, to socialism, to democracy and nationalism, all in varying degrees of success.

This background leaves a culturally rich and diverse area with the potential for real growth in many spheres, but also the undeniable potential for dangerous divisions. On one hand, the region has an infrastructure of urban centers, roads, telecommunication and irrigation that could help it to become an agricultural and industrial powerhouse for Central Asia. The Ferghana Valley has a regular supply of water from the surrounding mountains, an abundance of summer sun, and a relatively mild winter; a very large, highly skilled and literate workforce; and of particular significance for PCI, a prominent memory of internationalism and interdependence.

On the other hand, the region also has a recent history of political extremism, organized inter-ethnic violence, rising fundamentalism, illegal trade, drug trafficking on a massive scale, armed invasion, and a confusing and provocative system of increasingly militarized borders. Contributing to the confusion is the fact that the three republics have taken a radically different approach to economic and political reforms since their independence. Combining this with spiraling poverty, massive unemployment, centralized government policies and interests, and a disintegrating, outdated agricultural, social and industrial infrastructure, the prospects for the Ferghana Valley can also look distinctly bleak.

The Peaceful Communities Initiative harnesses the Ferghana Valley's existing strengths at the community level in order to reduce resentment bred by resource scarcity and mismanagement and to foster open communication across the borders the Ferghana Valley. It is a modest, but real contribution to a brighter future for this important part of Central Asia.



## **The Project Fundamentals: Five Teams, Twenty-Two Communities**

Given the special tensions and stresses of the area where PCI works, it is of particular importance that infrastructure and social projects are led by the local population, and consider relations among neighboring communities. Inter-community relations in Central Asia are always more complex than outsiders fully understand. To ensure an infrastructure project that helps one community will not harm another it is vital that every step is driven by local community groups, and ideally by neighbouring communities together.

The five field teams in the Peaceful Communities Initiative consist of three or four people, plus a driver who is also a trained facilitator. No single partner NGO has more than one representative in each team. The teams that result are mixed ethnically and nationally, giving each team one member who speaks the local language of each community as a first language. In more tense situations, this helps villages understand that the team has an international perspective and will not favor one group over another.



**Team 1-Pahtaabad, Tajikistan** is on the border with Kyrgyzstan with a population of approximately 800. The community is 99% ethnic Kyrgyz and has come to feel increasingly isolated and neglected by the local Tajikistan government. The village has no public transport, natural gas, limited access to clean drinking water, no telephone or postal service, and an overcrowded school. The combination of ethnic disenfranchisement and inadequate educational facilities leads many of Pahtaabad's youth to cross the canal into neighboring Kyrgyzstan to attend school with other ethnic Kyrgyz. The sense that these Tajikistan nationals have no connection or future in Tajikistan only further divides and isolates this community.

**Team 2 – Vorukh, Uzbekistan**, is 3 km from the Tajikistan border and has a population of about 1200 with 75% ethnic Tajik. The village has no natural gas for heat, limited access to irrigation and drinking water, inadequate school space and scarce educational materials, and problems with customs and borders, including the mining of the border that has resulted in deaths and loss of livestock. On the border is a disputed 115 hectares of land that is farmed by Uzbeks from Tajikistan, and complaints by Vorukh farmers that they use too much water.

**Team 3 – Boz Adyr, Kyrgyzstan** is located on the border of the Sokh enclave and its population is 99% ethnic Kyrgyz. The main tensions stem from the shortage of irrigation water that flows from the Sokh enclave. In addition, there are numerous land disputes between farmers over access to land. To date the land demarcations between Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan have not been finalized.

**Team 4 – Jar-Kyshta, Kyrgyzstan** is located on the Uzbekistan border 40 km east of Osh and has a largely ethnic Uzbek population of about 1800. Until 1998, the majority of the population went to school and worked in Uzbekistan, but now have problems crossing the border. There is no school in the community, and no access to drinking water. In the land privatization process, farmers received very small land plots and irrigation management is in a state of chaos.

**Team 5- Burbolik, Uzbekistan** has a population of 7000. The community is 75% ethnic Tajik. This community, like so many others, has problems with schools, irrigation and drinking water, and border crossing. Over the past years there have been rising ethnic tensions (especially with the neighboring communities Kyrgyz-Kyshta (100% ethnic Kyrgyz) and Katput (100% ethnic Uzbek). These ethnic tensions have resulted in fatalities and injuries.

These five sites exemplify of the sorts of issues faced by the communities in which PCI has worked during its first year. There are twenty-two villages in total, mostly situated in pairs over an international border, but often in clusters of three communities, and in some cases single, isolated villages. The villages range in size from 800 to over 10,000 people and are almost entirely agricultural communities, with little or no employment outside of the farms, schools and local government, and very limited capital and access to utilities.

The examples above show a range of conflict levels and problems that are representative of all twenty-two sites. Conflict levels range from limited communication to heated arguments and armed fighting amongst farmers over water, to skirmishes between border guards and citizens that result in fatalities. The focus of such conflict is most often access to water or the international border, but often includes access to education and health care, transport and land.

A full list of the sites in which the Peaceful Communities Initiative worked in the first year appears in Appendix A.



*Kyrgyz Community members in Pahtaabad have come to feel increasingly isolated and neglected by the local Tajik government.*



## The Project Calendar : One Year in the Life of PCI

	<u>Process</u>	<u>Illustrative Examples</u>
<b>Oct '01</b>	<i>USAID \$2.1 million Grant Awarded</i>	FTI joins PCI
	<i>Forming Partnerships</i>	ICA hires Suhrob as community mobilizer
<b>Nov</b>	<i>Selecting Teams</i>	First PCI full-team meeting, Osh
	<i>Team Strategy Meetings</i>	Ferghana Valley Youth Basketball League opens in Andijan
<b>Dec</b>		Team 3 selects Hushyar & Sogment villages to work in over the next 3 years
<b>Jan '02</b>	<i>Site Selections</i>	Team 4 presents PRA results in Naiman, Uzbekistan
	<i>Participatory Assessments</i>	Nawruz celebrations
<b>Feb</b>		Team 1 investigates Kulundu school foundations
<b>Mar</b>	<i>Social Projects Begin</i>	
	<i>Discussions on Infrastructure Needs</i>	Local Government commits to major contribution to Pahtabuston pipeline
<b>Apr</b>		Children's Day, Borbalik
<b>May</b>	<i>Infrastructure Project Development</i>	Youth Initiative Camp, Osh
	<i>Further Social Projects</i>	
<b>Jun</b>	<i>Summer Social Events</i>	Korjantog village chooses to build a medical clinic
<b>Jul</b>	<i>Advanced Community Mobilisation Training</i>	
	<i>First Infrastructure Projects Underway</i>	Community Meeting, Bahmal
<b>Aug</b>		
	<i>Site Expansion Begins</i>	
<b>Sep</b>		
<b>Oct '02</b>		



### Next Steps

Over the next two years the Peaceful Communities Initiative will expand to a further eight communities in the southern Ferghana Valley. These will mainly be sites with higher levels of tension, but will be in the same vicinity as the communities where the field teams are currently working. The teams will maintain their commitment to all the PCI communities over the next two years. For further details see the Year Two Workplan.

## **Activities in Year One: Infrastructure Projects**

In the summer of 2001, Mercy Corps conducted an assessment of conditions in the Ferghana Valley. The resulting publication, *The Heart of Central Asia*, showed that the greatest needs across the region are related to drinking and irrigation water, access to healthcare, poor condition of schools, decaying agricultural and industrial base. To address these pressing needs by providing repairs and reconstruction is a significant contribution to improving these communities' standard of living.

As previously mentioned, solving an immediate need with an infrastructure project without taking into account the complexities of the relations in that area has the potential to do more harm than good. For example, improving the life for an ethnic Kyrgyz minority in a Kyrgyzstan village could result in the Uzbek majority in that village feel abandoned, and create resentment of both the foreign presence and their national and local governments. PCI has taken special care in understanding such complexities in all infrastructure projects. In addition, PCI works with communities to develop a plan for the sustainability of each structure, which typically involves a pricing mechanism, which increases the challenges when working in extremely poor communities. The PCI teams' daily interaction with communities in the development of projects has led to cost sharing that often exceeds more than 50%, and a greater sense of community ownership.

The examples below explain not only the basic details of the physical projects themselves, but also the role they played in the relationships between and within each community. Following are three examples showing a range of project types, and a full list of all fifteen projects undertaken by PCI thus far.

### **Sogment/Hushyar/Charbak**

- Irrigation pump station and water delivery
- To reduce longstanding conflict over water usage and access
- Community \$15,000, PCI \$35,000
- Work commenced August 2002

**Background:** The seven enclaves that lie between Osh and Khujand are among the Ferghana Valley's most bizarre eccentricities, and a source of serious tension. The largest of these, the Sokh enclave, is the territory of Uzbekistan, but lies within Batken oblast in Kyrgyzstan, has a purely ethnic Tajik population, and also contains the only road linking Batken city to the rest of Kyrgyzstan.

The area is very poor, and suffers greatly from conflict over access to water. Tensions between Tajik and Kyrgyz communities became so tense in 1988 that the Soviet Army had to intervene by helicopter to prevent an armed battle ostensibly over land and water rights.



*PCI staff view the Sokh River from above.*

**Project Details:** The Community Initiative Groups in the neighboring villages of Hushyar, Uzbekistan and Charbak, Kyrgyzstan on the southern end of the Sokh enclave had absolutely no doubt what sort of project was needed to improve their lives and the relationship among their villages. Rather than starting with smaller projects, they opted to invest in just one project to pump water from a canal running off the Sokh river, up to their villages. The water will then run through Hushyar to Charbak.

There is a stream that supplies water to Sogment, Kyrgyzstan but little water reaches Hushyar and Charbak during the growing season, thus tensions between the upstream and downstream users is an annual occurrence. An added complexity is that since state subsidized electricity from Uzbekistan is now used to benefit a village in Kyrgyzstan, an agreement was required between the national governments.



**Pahtabuston, Uzbekistan**

- Gas pipeline
- To supply gas for heating and cooking to an isolated ethnic Kyrgyz community
- Community \$8,200, PCI \$12,600
- Status: commenced July 02

**Background:** The village of Pahtabuston is one of two communities in which PCI works primarily because of its sense of isolation and the perception that this isolation has not been addressed because of residents' ethnicity. It is not so much the relationship between Pahtabuston and its immediate neighbours that is at issue, as its relationship with the local government and the Uzbek Republic as a whole.

**Project Details:** Over 4.5 kilometers of pipe were required to connect the village to the main gas pipeline. Although a PCI Community Initiative Group started the initiative, the project gained momentum and generated a cost share by the local government and the community of more than 50%.



*Pipes contributed by the community of Pahtabuston are used to provide gas.*

**Special Elements:** This example shows how a community came to grips with the complexity of solving its problems, and the solution resulted in improved relationships between the community and the local government. The local community provided thousands of labor days in completing the project and the local government provided all the technical labor and equipment. In addition, the CIG assisted a neighboring village in receiving a grant from Counterpart Consortium to extend the main pipeline and additional 2 kilometers.

**Kulunda, Kyrgyzstan**

- School construction
- To finish building a school that will be shared by children from both sides of the border
- Costs \$22,350
- Status: building started 14/10/02

**Background:** The village of Kulunda lies about one hour south of Khojund. PCI team 1 has been working there since January because tensions between Kulunda and the Uzbek/Tajik village of Ovhei-Kalacha in neighboring Tajikistan are running very high as the irrigation systems disintegrate and as the border between the two countries becomes more and more of an obstacle.

**Project Details:** The field team and CIG considered a variety of options for transforming the foundations and first walls of an abandoned school construction project into a usable building. With the support of the community and a contribution by local government, they will be able to finish the first floor of the school with 7 classrooms, and provide schooling for 640 children up to the 11th form. This is particularly important for the village because the only other local school is massively overstretched, with over 1800 students now attending, more than twice what it was designed to serve.



*A CIG member shows PCI field officers the unfinished school in Kulunda.*

**Special Elements:** The school lies a stone's throw away from the Kyrgyz Village of Pahtaabad in Tajikistan. Many of the children there have no access to schooling in their own language, so the communities have shared the local contribution to this project, and children from both sides of the border will be in classes together.

### Summary of All Infrastructure Projects in the First Year

Communities Involved	Project Description	PCI Contribution	Community Contribution	Status
Karayontok (UZB)	Medical Station (Building)	\$ 19766	\$ 12619 + \$50,000 from World Bank for Medical Equipment	In Progress
Naiman (UZB)	School Repair (Roof)	\$ 6956	\$ 2303	Completed
Naiman (UZB), Jeke- Miste (KYR)	Construction of Water Pipeline (Drinking Water)	\$13000	\$ 4100 + \$2000 from Soros Foundation	In Progress
Jar Kyshta (KYR)	Reconstruction of School Building	\$ 7039	\$ 3784	In Progress
Pahtabuston (UZB)	Gas Pipeline Construction	\$ 12600	\$8200	In Progress
Vorukh (UZB)	School Repair	\$ 935		Completed
Ravat (TAJ)	Equipping 3 Rooms of School # 12	\$ 2200	\$1300	Completed
Sogment (KYR)	Building of Bathhouse	\$ 4419	\$ 2127	In Progress
Kara Tokoy (KYR)	Building of Bathhouse	\$ 6919	\$ 2124	In Progress
Boz Adyr (KYR)	School Repair	\$ 5756	\$ 2689	Completed
Hushyar (UZB), Charbak (KYR)	New Water Pump and Construction of Pipeline for Irrigation (length 4942 meters)	\$ 37500	\$ 9020	In Progress
Osh-Konosh (KYZ)	Sport Facilities for Condominiums	\$ 12500		Completed
Ovchi (TAJ)	School Repair	\$ 22352	\$5822	In Progress

\*PCI leveraged \$21,300 from CAIP for these 4 projects.

In addition to the above, PCI has numerous projects currently in the advanced planning stages and many are nearing implementation.



*A future pupil tours the school being built in Jar Kyshta.*



*Children visit the project in Kulunda.*

### Interview with Akjol

***Please provide background on your career before you joined PCI?*** My first job was in 1972 as a builder in Kadamjay in Osh Oblast (now part of Batken Oblast). In 1974 I was enlisted into the Soviet Army and served in Czechoslovakia. In 1982, I received a degree in Irrigation Engineering from Kyrgyzstan Agricultural Institute. After finishing my studies, I held numerous positions building and managing irrigation systems in Batken. For some years, I held the position of Director of Frunze State Farm. After independence, I became the Head of the Kara-Baks Rural Government for four years. My last position before joining PCI was as the General Director of Agricultural Department of Batken Raion. In December 2001, I joined Mercy Corps as a field officer on PCI and a member of Team Two, which focuses on the Uzbekistan and Tajikistan border communities.

***What would you consider to be the turning point for your career?*** During my work with PCI, my viewpoints and understanding of many things has changed. My life has changed. I have learned a tremendous amount, including the methods of PRA, facilitation, and conflict analysis. Before PCI, my work was primarily based in Batken Oblast. Now I am on business trips in the neighbouring republics almost every week. I meet different people of various nationalities and ages in the communities. Interacting with them gives me many insights. I am learning to listen to people. In retrospect, I have made many mistakes in the way that I have interacted professionally in the past. If I had the knowledge and community interaction skills that I have gained from my experiences with PCI, I could have avoided many mistakes.

***You have worked in community development for almost 30 years, in the Soviet Union, independent Republic of Kyrgyzstan, and now with PCI. Please comment on the different approaches to development that have been used during these different experiences.*** Before PCI, the other positions I held had the same basic approach. We implemented orders from above without any discussion. We demanded that our employees carry out specific tasks and we were not interested in their opinions. We rarely listened to them. Criticism was unacceptable. During the Soviet period, we did not have any notion of unemployment. All of the country worked. There was so much work to be done, and the whole country worked. Nobody thought about tomorrow. We were just implementing the demands of the authorities. The individuals who planned and made decisions had no interaction with common people. Now it is the opposite. We do everything with input from as many people as possible. We discuss projects beforehand and the people think for themselves. Only now are we true supporters of the people.

***What do you appreciate most about PCI?*** There are many valuable aspects of the PCI project. We are representatives of different nationalities but we are implementing one project to achieve the common goal of peace. Our aim coincides with the aims of communities where we work. We are accessible for them and people trust us. More than anything, it is this trust that I appreciate.

***What personal satisfaction do you gain working on PCI?*** It is extremely satisfying working to solve community problems. I enjoy seeing the happy faces of the people we help and their kindness and trust towards us. I'll never forget one young man who had been disabled by a landmine in Ravat, Tajikistan. The look on his face when we gave him a wheelchair and new clothes will stay with me always. Also, I will not forget all the smiling children at their end of the school year party in Pahtabuston, Uzbekistan, at the opening of a new school in Vorukh, during the children's excursion to Kokand, and at the summer camp in Osh. I think this makes it all worthwhile.

***What results have you seen from your work on PCI?*** Central Asians have a strong tradition of solving problems together, but for such a long period of time, things were initiated only by the State. People grew used to having their problems solved by others. The main result of PCI project is that our communities are learning to identify and solve their problems with their own initiative. Many strong community initiative groups are now bringing people together with people to solve the social and economic problems of their village.

*Akjol Masaliev is an engineer, and an employee of Mercy Corps Kyrgyzstan. He works on PCI team 2 and lives in Batken City.*

## **Activities in Year One: Social Events**

The Peaceful Communities Initiative could not reach its goals with infrastructure solutions alone; its goal is ultimately social change. A solution to a drinking water shortage is helpful, but that community then has to deal with its lack of gas, or with difficult access to markets, or with unmarked minefields, for example. The list will go on, and so will the need for just, shared solutions. Communication based on trust, reliable information and personal friendships is therefore as important to PCI's goals as concrete in the ground. Such positive relationships can help the communities resolve other priority problems on their list. The social events are also excellent starting points for PCI work in the communities. Since infrastructure projects take longer to prepare, the social events are an early sign of PCI commitment in communities.

The social events that occurred in the first year to help rebuild or maintain relationships ranged from the very small scale (a chess tournament between the elders from Naiman and Jeke-Miste) to regional events costing several thousand dollars (such as the Ferghana Valley Youth Basketball League). Below are the stories of five very different events in the first year of PCI.



### **Note on Youth**

Without any knowledge of a neutral language, slim prospects for rewarding employment ahead, and no experience of internationalism or travel behind them, young people in the Ferghana Valley are more likely to be involved in serious conflict than the older generations. Since over half of the ten million people in the area are under the age of 18, that risk must be taken very seriously. Below are three types of events that PCI has run to try to build peaceful connections between young urban and rural neighbors.

### **Pahtabuston**

- Navruz celebrations, March 2002
- Guests from the host village, their neighbors and delegations from other PCI sites
- Cost \$300

**Background:** PCI's Team 2 works in the region between Kokand, Uzbekistan and Kanibadam, Tajikistan, in four villages with ethnic minority populations. Although in all cases the local government has been very supportive of PCI's work in these communities, the perception that ethnicity is a factor in the villages' lack of resources remains. This social event was aimed at restoring normal, peaceful contact between neighboring villages through a common celebration of the Persian festival of Navruz.



*Women watch the Navruz festival in Pahtabuston.*

**Event Details:** The event was organized principally by the newly-formed Community Initiative Group in Pahtabuston, with the support of the local government and the village mahallas. It took place in the idyllic setting of the village's largest apricot orchard, under thick white blossom, and surrounded by hanging carpets. Guests came from Ravat and Vorukh, the other communities where PCI Team 2 works, and joined the local population and guests from Mercy Corps, ICA, the local government and the media. There was a wrestling competition, dancing, singing, a performance by a famous music and comedy troupe from Tashkent, a clown show, lunch and speeches.

**Special Elements:** This was the first such event for decades in Pahtabuston, a very poor village, with no resources to spend on celebrations. The impact, however, went far beyond the village itself. The Navruz party received coverage from the local television press, and a piece that showed the party and

discussed the goal of bringing together the different ethnic groups in one common celebration was repeated several times over the next few weeks on Uzbekistan national news. It is said that President Karimov himself saw the footage.

#### **Youth Basketball League**

- Osh, Andijan, Ferghana and Maili-Suu
- October 2001 to June 2002
- 24 games played in 4 large tournaments
- Cost \$2,500

**Background:** During the Soviet Union, young people from the different republics that shared the Ferghana Valley would meet regularly to play and compete in various sports. Since independence, the borders have become increasingly difficult to cross even for something as innocent as youth sporting events, and funding for such activities has been almost entirely cut off. There is almost no contact between young people from cities just kilometers apart, or even between villages separated by as little as a canal. Most athletes participating in the league had never traveled across a border.

**Event Details:** The Youth Basketball League was a series of four tournaments held in each of the home cities of the participating teams. These tournaments had the support of the local sports committees and were run as international events with official opening and closing ceremonies. More than 400 spectators attended many of these events. The playing standard of the league increased dramatically over the course of the season, largely because athletes had an incentive to practice everyday. Trainers said that since the athletes now had these events to look forward to, the willingness and commitment to practice increased dramatically. An extended playing season resulted in the athletes building strong friendships with members of other teams. After the season ended, all teams participated in their respective national championships with unprecedented results. In Kyrgyzstan, the Mailu Su and Osh teams finished 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup>, and in Uzbekistan, the Andijan and Ferghana teams finished 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup>. These results were the best in the history of all clubs.



*The Osh Team is introduced.*

Sporting events have become regular fixtures in the PCI communities. These are frequently combined with local celebrations such as Navruz. Additionally, villages have come together to form single teams that then play against similarly combined teams from regions where other PCI teams work. For example, the villages of Ovchi-Kalacha, Pahtaabad, International and Kulunda formed a football team together that has played against similar teams from Batken and Sokh.

**Special Elements:** The Ferghana Valley Basketball League received a lot of media coverage through the course of the tournament. In discussions with Nike and Mercy Corps Headquarters in Portland, Nike agreed to sponsor the league with basketball shoes. Upon receiving the shoes, additional one-day tournaments were held with over 600 boys and girls from all over the Ferghana Valley participating and receiving free shoes.

#### **Summer Youth Camps**

- Teams 1, 3 and 4/5
- PCI wide CIG youth camp
- To build local trans-border friendships, and teach skills useful for PCI's work
- Cost from \$1,000 to \$2,500

**Background:** Many youth camps bring together children and adolescents from far apart to build friendships, but often these relationships cannot be sustained because the young people never meet again. The PCI youth camps aimed instead to bring together members of neighbouring villages to form bonds that would last, and which will encourage trusting communication and generosity as these young people become more prominent members of their communities.

**Event Details:** All the PCI field teams ran summer camps for schoolchildren from the regions where they work. At these camps the schedule typically combined sports, games and cultural shows of singing, dancing and other performances, with short classes in tolerance, leadership and teamwork, led by trainers from The Foundation for Tolerance International (FTI). In addition to providing the children





*Children enjoy the company of new friends at a camp disco.*

with the chance to build lasting relationships, these events also clearly helped the local communities and CIGs trust the agenda of PCI and its field teams.

There was also a large camp for all of the under-18 members of PCI's Community Initiative Group. Every CIG includes at least two young people, and the camp was designed to help them understand PCI's projects and their role as representatives of all young people in their area. Additionally, this gathering helped form the sense of a single team between all the young people in each area's CIGs. This connection is sustainable because it is local, and will be fostered by the PCI field teams who joined FTI's trainers in the camp.

*In August of 2002, PCI teams organized a camp near Osh, Kyrgyzstan for 60 children from 22 communities in Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan. As this was the first time that many of these children had left their own communities - let alone their own countries - this opportunity to meet, share experiences and discuss their role as youth in the development of their communities was unique, to say the least. Throughout the week, many of these children had the chance to share their experiences and perspectives. The following excerpts were taken from those conversations.*

"At first, some villages treated PCI staff with anxiety – they didn't believe that someone would help them with their difficulties without having their own interests. But after various activities such as community events, the residents understood their sincere intentions and began to support them completely. This understanding and trust is good, but it was not always extended to everyone. The ideas and opinions of young members in the Community Initiative Groups were sometimes not taken seriously by some adults. Now that adults have seen that we would not give in, and as our decisions prove valuable on some issues, adults are beginning to respect us more and more." - *Nadira and Nigora of Naiman, Uzbekistan*

"Since our community is on the border with Kyrgyzstan, one of our main problems is that border guards from Kyrgyzstan let their own citizens cross into the territory of Uzbekistan, while not allowing citizens of Uzbekistan to enter their own country. It's difficult to determine who has what rights. Also, it's totally dangerous for residents of both sides to approach the border because it's easy to be blown up by a mine. This doesn't make sense because people need to live there." - *Ilhom, Maksad and Elmurod of Katput, Uzbekistan*

"There are enough problems in our village that should be solved, but unfortunately it's very difficult to do. Sometimes it is overwhelming when we think of our future. We have no pure drinking water at all, and no gas. These are two main problems. Presently, with the help of PCI, work on gasification is being undertaken. It is a start." - *Maftuna from Pahtabuston, Uzbekistan*



**Burbolik / Kyrgyz-Kyshtak Children's Day**

- A first meeting between the children from Team 5's area
- 1<sup>st</sup> June '02; \$x00

**Background:** The relationship between the neighbouring villages of Burbolik in Uzbekistan and Kyrgyz-Kyshtak in Kyrgyzstan has become increasingly tense in the last few years. There is conflict over water usage and access to land, and a confusing militarized border that cuts off access to markets. Tensions grew last December when a shepherd, returning from grazing his herd across the border, was killed after a fight broke out with border guards when he refused to pay a fee for crossing the border. Young people are often the focus - and regularly the instigators - of conflict. For example, in spring of 2002, some young boys from Burbolik, Uzbekistan were caught stealing green wheat from land on the other side of the border. With emotions flaring, Kyrgyz boys stabbed one of the boys who had been caught. As an isolated incident this is of minor importance, but in an already tense atmosphere it assumed real significance.

**Event Details:** Team 5, with the local CIGs and teachers, put together an event to bring together the children from these two villages and other neighbouring communities where the team works, to celebrate the common holiday of Children's Day and to reduce the tensions between children in the neighboring communities. The local children welcomed groups from the neighbouring communities into their territory (as in the photo below), and then each school group put on a display of songs and dancing. A band played, the children and their teachers danced, there was a chalk-drawing competition on the road on the theme of friendship, and a kite flying competition, before all the children went to a local restaurant for lunch. Total cost just \$250.



*Children from villages in Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan greet each other as they meet for the first time.*

**Special Elements:** It was the first time these children had met together, despite the fact that many live within sight of one another. The momentum from this friendly and positive event has traveled up through the older generations. In September, field team members acted as facilitators for a meeting among these villages to discuss the situation, particularly regarding the conflict among adolescents and border issues. The result has been a resumption of pre-independence ties among the communities. They now regularly invite one another to events such as weddings, and there is a council of elders who will work to resolve any other conflicts, and to bring the younger generations together again.

**Team 2 area Teachers' Conference**

- Bringing teachers from repaired schools together to discuss their role in the community
- 4/10/02
- Cost \$1,100

**Background:** Team 2, working in the area between Kokand and Kanibadam, works with community groups in four villages that have all chosen school repairs as priorities. Saminjon, a PCI field officer from BWA Kokand, is a former school director, and has been working in the third sector for the last ten years. It was therefore decided to bring teachers from all these villages together, along with representatives of regional departments of education, to discuss the role that their newly repaired schools can play in the development of their communities as a whole.

**Event Details:** Having 40 teachers and administrators convene in Kokand for a day-long conference provided the opportunity for representatives of four different communities to examine their common challenges and opportunities. Working in small groups and through open discussions, the participants were able to meet and discuss with their counterparts the concept of civil society, the role of teachers in influencing community development through children and their families, and the common issues faced by educators in the region. One of the most interesting activities was when the group was divided into three groups and tasked with examining the main problems which schools face along with possible solutions, while each represented a different perspective - that of the parents, the community and the school itself. Many participants enjoyed viewing these issues from different angles.



**Special Elements:** An ideal combination of infrastructure and social project, the engagement of and dialogue between educators and administrators who represent two countries and three ethno-linguistic groups is essential for the long-term viability of these schools. Furthermore, committing educators to the process of finding community-based solutions will certainly have a strong effect on the youth of these villages. Additionally, this event received media coverage in all three countries through ‘Voices of the Ferghana Valley’.



*At Navrus in Pahtabuston, villagers enjoy one of the first large celebrations in recent memory.*

## **Activities in Year One: Community Mobilization**

The preceding pages have detailed some examples of single events or projects that the PCI field teams and Community Initiative Groups have led and managed. But it is the experience that residents have of community mobilization that is perhaps the most important legacy of the Peaceful Communities Initiative because it combines the elements of empowering residents to make decisions affecting their community's peaceful development with the responsibility of listening to the many voices that need to be heard in that decision.

PCI's field staff act as facilitators in the process described below. As facilitators, their own opinions are not heard; they work instead to create an atmosphere of trust and careful, positive analysis of a situation. Despite their own expertise and knowledge, the field teams have minimal influence on the choice of projects or events to be run, or on whom it is that will run them.

### **Step One: PRA**

The process known as Participatory Rural Appraisal places the outsider in the role of listener, and places the emphasis onto the ability of a community to assess its own needs through simple exercises and discussion. PRA techniques can be done in a street, in the dust, or in a classroom with flip charts, and all can participate equally, young and old, professional or unskilled, men or women. The teams do several days of PRA work in a community and then present results to residents. The different perceptions of the village, and different needs expressed are almost always a revelation to the audience. PCI has used PRA to identify problems as well as defining solutions.



### **Step Two: Brainstorming**

Representatives from all parts of the community, mixed professions, ages and genders meet together to consider at first individually and then in small groups, what resources the village has in human and material terms. They then analyze what challenges the village currently faces and imagine how they would like the village to be different in five years' time. In the photograph to the left, a mother from Bahmal village writes her own answers. The box on her paper is for the current problems in the village. "I don't think we really have any," she said. This was a somewhat rose-tinted perspective that the rest of the room did not share!



### **Step Three: Possible Projects**

The insights from step three are collected and presented on a wall to be used as the foundation of the next step which is to decide upon several possible projects within the realistic parameters of the community's resources and PCI's support. The small groups are then asked to prepare a basic structure for each of these projects, including the community's contribution in labor and materials, the number and type of beneficiaries and the probable cost in capital and time.



### **Step Four: Voting**



Everybody in the room then has the chance to vote for two projects that they would like to see actually happen. When the votes are finally added up (an exciting moment) three top priorities emerge and a Community Initiative Group is chosen, including young people, women, farmers as well as some professional men and elders. This CIG is charged with the task of looking further into the three priority projects, doing feasibility studies with the PCI team, then leading the planning and construction of the project and associated social events themselves.

### **Step Five: The Projects and Events**

The final step is to construct the project, but it is very important that this is not the end of the community involvement. These projects are meeting a basic human need, such as the supply of clean drinking water, but are also bringing communities together. The projects are therefore combined with social events at which hundreds of people can see the results of their community's decision-making, and ideally the results of their neighbor's decisions too, and see who has volunteered their time and effort for the cause. Here, all three elements of PCI's work meet: Infrastructure Projects, Social Events, and Community Mobilization.



## **Community Mobilization: The Community Initiative Group (CIG)**

### **Who they are**

The Community Initiative Groups are the foundation of the PCI process. They are the voice of their community. They were selected in various ways, some by votes and some by consensus. In general, they are the most active citizens that were involved in the Participatory Rural Appraisal process. It was also made clear by the PCI team that it was essential that these groups are representative of the local demographics. Thus, the CIGs are comprised of young and old, women and men, mahalla and local government representatives, and have the ethnic mix that represents their community. In Boz Adyr, the group is comprised of several teachers, farmers, local government, a nurse, a pensioner, and several teenagers.



*Most of the Boz Adyr CIG with PCI team and volunteer carpenters.*

### **How they are trained**

The CIGs have been trained by PCI teams and with several additional trainings by the Foundation for Tolerance International. These trainings include project development, proposal writing, water committees, tolerance and team building, consensus building, and the third sector. Also, the children from all the communities that attended the Osh Youth Camp become members in their community's CIG. The PCI teams meet with the CIGs weekly to explore ways that PCI can support their activities. For example, FTI provided training in Boz Adyr and Kara Tokoy on 1) the nature of conflict, its reasons and types, and 2) practical skills in non-violent conflict prevention, tolerance attitudes and conflict management.

### **What they do**

The CIGs are the foundation of the project. In most of the communities they meet weekly to discuss their activities and future plans. The CIGs manage all the infrastructure and social projects. They are the main contact point for the PCI teams, and a key in PCI's relationship with the local government. They are also essential in raising awareness of PCI objectives and increasing the community's participation in all activities. For example, in the rehabilitation of the school in Boz Adyr, the CIG was able to get labor assistance from more than 200 citizens.

### **The Experience of a CIG member in his own words: Sultan Ali of Charbak, Kyrgyzstan**

Although there were many problems in my community, the main problem was the lack of drinking and irrigation water. This has been the fundamental cause of violent conflict between my village (Charbak) and Hushyar.

When I first started working with PCI's Team 3, I wasn't sure they could help us. But after some small social activities, we began to trust them. We sent our children to a PCI summer camp, because we understood that PCI was genuinely trying to help us. We hoped social activities such as these would help educate our people and children. I want to express one main point: PCI has changed our lives and given us hope and belief in a future for our children and our community.

The main reason why Kyrgyz and Tajiks are together constructing this (lift irrigation) project is because for many years our parents (and their parents) lived together as friends helping each other through difficult times.

When the Soviet Union collapsed, really hard times began, and it became very difficult to understand each other. But when the PCI project chose us, we started to believe and hope. The time of friendship and good relations between us inspired us to work together on a water project for peaceful life.

When the project was agreed by the two communities, I cried tears of happiness. This was the start of my life's dream of resolving the communities' problems. The people from the Hushyar community, USAID, and PCI, accomplished something I had wanted to do my whole life. We will never forget about their help.



*Sultan Ali in Tashkent, 1974*

## **Looking Back, Looking Forward: Coordination**

One of the cornerstones of the PCI process is the comprehensive approach to the development of the community. Though our primary assets are our 17 field officers, there are numerous other organizations working in the Ferghana Valley with whom PCI has collaborated, and they have provided their invaluable experience, technical assistance and funding. A few examples are included below:

- For the Jekke Mist and Naiman trans-border drinking water system, Soros provided a grant for \$2000 and the International Secretariat for Water is providing training for the water committees to assure the sustainability of the project.
- With the Urban Institute, PCI implemented the Sports Condominium project, where we constructed five sports facilities and created citywide basketball and volleyball leagues for inner city boys and girls. Resident associations designed to manage shared resources were established with the assistance of the Urban Institute.
- Counterpart Consortium provided training for the PCI Team in developing Community Initiative Groups. They also provided a grant to build a drinking water system in Kara Tokoy and worked with the CIG in Pahktabuston to add an additional two kilometers of pipe to the natural gas pipeline project. This additional piping will provide natural gas to the neighboring mahalla, which was not included in the initial project design.
- Central Asian Free Exchange has addressed anemia in PCI communities by providing training and iron tablets, as well as operating an eyeglass distribution project for the elderly in Naiman and neighboring mahallas.
- UNDP sponsored a Ferghana Valley-wide volleyball tournament in Karayontok.
- The World Bank has committed \$50,000 for medical equipment for the health clinic that is being constructed in Karayontok.
- Save the Children has provided training at PCI Team Meetings on how to better incorporate children in our work.
- Abt Associate's Zdrav Plus has included four PCI communities in its youth soccer program. Zdrav Plus provided uniforms, transportation, referees, meals, nets, and balls for a game day held in Naiman. PCI provided soccer cleats and repairs to the field and goalposts.
- ADRD provided \$3000 of winter clothing to PCI community Pahktabuston.
- PCI has established a long-term cooperation with Nike Corporation to promote sports activities in the Ferghana Valley. The first distribution of 3688 pairs of basketball shoes has been distributed to thousands of young athletes in the Ferghana Valley.
- Internews produced a documentary of the Osh basketball team and their participation in the Ferghana Valley Youth Basketball League.

## **Looking Back, Looking Forward: The Impact of Year One**

In Year One of PCI, our teams had the privilege of working with over 65,500 beneficiaries to make a difference in their own lives. This number includes residents in PCI communities, individuals who have attended social events, people trained, CIG members and attendees of community meetings. To put faces to numbers, success in Year One took many forms including the elders' council in Borbalik/Kyrgyz Kyshtak, the joint water project in Naiman, the enthusiastic CIG in Vorukh, the young people's newsletter in Kulundu, and the support of the Sokh Akim. This is real cooperation among people seeking real change in their communities.

Because the projects identified and implemented by CIGs are designed to reduce the long-term potential for conflict by addressing the most pressing needs of the communities, these projects have the unique opportunity to make a lasting impression throughout the entire community. The real impact of PCI will be better articulated by following the involvement of everyday citizens in the community mobilization process, and the resulting attitudinal change in these communities throughout the lifetime of the project.





### **Looking Back, Looking Forward: Some Lessons Learned**

PCI has continually tried to improve management of the project. Below are some of the lessons learned in Year One.

- Working with young people is a priority for the conflict prevention focus of the project. However, it became clear that more conservative communities are reticent to include girls in social events far from home, and that both field teams and initiative groups have felt the need to train young people before they become fully active members of the CIG. We addressed this problem with a PCI-wide youth camp that involved active young people and those from the CIGs to build friendships, share ideas and learn about working in participative groups. The participants of the youth camp have become members of the CIGs.
- PCI management did not adequately predict the stress on the staff by traveling, working in difficult conditions, and adapting the work schedules to the realities of the communities. The pressures on agricultural workers during the growing season have meant that PCI teams have had to be flexible with the times that they work. Often meetings can only be conducted in the early morning or late evening. The winter months brought the challenge of working and trying to facilitate open and imaginative discussions in cold rooms. Little things like bringing a thermos of tea can go a long way towards creating a warm atmosphere.
- The central method that PCI has used in its community mobilization work has been facilitation. We have based much of this on the experience and highly developed techniques of our partner NGO in Tajikistan, ICA: EHIO. However, it is clear that this methodology has been less successful in rural environments than it has been in a controlled, formal meeting of professional development workers. The continued adaptation of this methodology to the less controlled rural situations is a high priority for PCI in Year 2. Furthermore, the need to focus more on the fundamentals of facilitation, and less on material aids, such as flipcharts and fancy markers, is essential.
- It has often been a challenge to PCI's field officers not to let their opinions dominate. Throughout the first year, one of management's key inputs into the mobilization process was working with both teams and individuals to guarantee the ethic of participation in all aspects of the decision-making process.
- Traveling in the Ferghana Valley, although difficult, is possible. The Tajikistan-Uzbekistan border has been the most troublesome, although the PCI staff continues to try and find easier approaches to crossing the border. Traveling has been made easier with letters from USAID, PCI ID Cards, and diplomatic/technical assistance plates for PCI automobiles.
- During the construction of the infrastructure projects, there is often confusion by the communities concerning the overall cost of the project, as communities are often not aware of





the cost share calculations (community labor and material valuations). In some cases, residents have suspected that those closer to the project might be lining their pockets. To make the process as transparent as possible, PCI teams have held open forums, distributed information sheets, and constructed public notice boards to publicize financial information from all contributors.



- The PCI teams used Participatory Rural Appraisal as a tool to gain an understanding of the dynamics and problems within the communities. Although PRA was used during the needs assessment process, it was not always used when implementing solutions. It has been necessary to continually reinforce the principle that PRA should be used as an ongoing tool to develop solutions while taking into account the changing dynamics of the villages.
- Coordination with other donors and USAID grantees has been extremely time consuming. Early on we realized that coordination made sense only after our communities were selected, as coordination has to be driven by the needs of the communities that we worked in.

## **Looking Back, Looking Forward: Year Two**

The year beginning October 1, 2002 will continue with the momentum of PCI's first working year. It will work with the same teams and the same NGOs, continuing in essence the same community mobilization process in the communities where we already work and expanding this process into a range of new communities.

The main difference in the second year will be addressing the potential for conflict by broadening our approach to community development with increased coordination with other USAID contractors and grantees, and other donors. Much of Year One was devoted to selecting the communities, establishing the CIGs and implementing the first projects. Year Two will allow us to better focus on the various sectors: employment, health, education, and youth. It will also focus on close collaboration with CAIP, building up the capacity of CIGs, sharing experiences with Mercy Corps' Community Mobilization Initiative in Georgia and elsewhere, expanding, tackling higher levels of conflict, and working on impact assessment.



*Aksakals bless the health clinic in Karayontok.*

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Appendix A

**USAID/PCI Communities**

<b>№</b>	<b>Community</b>	<b>Country</b>	<b>Team</b>	<b>Population</b>
1	Ovchi	Tajikistan	1	3900
2	International	Kyrgyzstan	1	3000
3	Pahtaabad	Tajikistan	1	900
4	Kulunda	Kyrgyzstan	1	9000
5	Pahtabuston	Uzbekistan	2	1900
6	Vorukh	Uzbekistan	2	2400
7	Ravat	Tajikistan	2	4500
8	Bahmal	Uzbekistan	2	3000
9	Boz Adyr	Kyrgyzstan	3	1500
10	Kara- Tokoy	Kyrgyzstan	3	900
11	Sharkabad	Uzbekistan	3	2200
12	Sogment	Kyrgyzstan	3	1600
13	Charbak	Kyrgyzstan	3	400
14	Hushyar	Uzbekistan	3	5500
15	Jar Kyshta	Kyrgyzstan	4	1800
16	Buriboshi	Uzbekistan	4	1800
17	Naiman	Uzbekistan	4	2500
18	Jeke- Miste	Kyrgyzstan	4	2300
19	Karayontok	Uzbekistan	5	1300
20	Kyrgyz- Kyshtak	Kyrgyzstan	5	3200
21	Burbolik	Uzbekistan	5	7100
22	Katput	Uzbekistan	5	4800
<b>Total:</b>				<b>65500</b>